



Essay Contest Rules and Prompt
27th Annual Essay and Slogan Contest
Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes

1. The Essay Contest is open to all Kentucky high school students in grades 9-12.
2. Essay entry is limited to one per student. Previous contest entries will not be accepted.
3. Essay may be no longer than 600 words. All entries must be typed and double-spaced.
4. Student and school names shall not appear anywhere in the body of the essay.
5. Essays will be judged on research and understanding of voting and the First Amendment, idea development, organization, language, and correctness (see attached rubric).
6. Students must submit their essays with the enclosed entry form. All sections of the entry form must be completed.
7. Essays may be submitted either online at www.sos.ky.gov/contests or by mail to the address below. Essays submitted online must be in Microsoft Word format.
8. All entries must be submitted electronically by 5 p.m. (EST) January 15, 2016, or postmarked by that date.
9. Entries become the property of the Kentucky Secretary of State's Office and will not be returned.
10. All guidelines must be met for any entry to be considered by contest judges.

Essay Prompt:

Before 1965, some states had voting practices and laws that made it difficult for minorities, in particular African-Americans, to vote. In early 1965, demonstrations and marches led to violent clashes with police, drawing the attention of the national media and generating national outrage. Later that year, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which eliminated many of the tools states had used to exclude minorities from participating in elections.

Fifty years later, the polls are open to many more citizens. Yet in 2014 only about 37 percent of people eligible to vote actually cast ballots, according to the United States Election Project. And although the founders intended for informed voters—citizens who learned about the issues, the candidates, and the candidates' positions on the issues—to cast ballots for people who represent their own views, many candidates focus on raising money and attacking their opponents rather than outlining their proposals to make America a better place to live for all of its residents.

Would a law requiring newspapers, both online and print, and broadcast outlets to devote space to outlining the issues for the audience increase the number of Americans voting without violating the First Amendment guarantee of a free press?

Mail entries to: ATTN: Slogan and Essay Contest
Office of the Secretary of State
Suite 152, State Capitol
700 Capital Avenue
Frankfort, KY 40601

You may also submit entries online at www.sos.ky.gov/contests.

Note: Family members of employees of the Office of the Secretary of State or the State Board of Elections are not eligible to enter the Essay Contest.